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ABSTRACT

Designed specifically for authors, both aspiring and experienced, who work with children and their teachers, this booklet offers advice for educators who want to write and publish professional articles or books. It examines the following eight topics: (1) what it means to be an author; (2) how to prepare to write: learning the craft of writing; (3) characteristics of high quality writing: writing well enough; (4) making time to write; (5) focusing on the topic; (6) where to find suitable outlets: type of publication, types of manuscripts; (7) fine-tuning a manuscript; and (8) what editors do: request peer review, communicate with authors, and oversee production. It also offers advice about ways to earn the acceptance of publishers. Contains an 18-item glossary and 86 references. (RS)

Writing About Teaching and Learning

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a guide for aspiring and experienced authors

by
Mary Renck Jalongo
and
Janet Brown McCracken

ASSOCIATION FOR CHILDHOOD EDUCATION INTERNATIONAL

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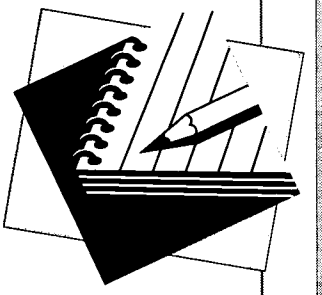
A kindergarten teacher asked one of her students, "Jason, what is the hardest thing about writing?" The 5-year-old grew pensive for a moment, then answered: "The hardest thing about writing is being the writer."

Jason's comment is a good starting point for any discussion of writing and publishing in education. Writing is hard work, yet many educators wish to share their ideas with a wider audience of families, teachers, librarians, administrators, teacher educators or professionals in allied fields. Most advice on how to write and publish, however, is geared toward freelance writers or English composition teachers, rather than educators who are seeking to publish professional articles or books.

This Association for Childhood Educational International publication is designed specifically for authors, both aspiring and experienced, who work with children and their teachers and who want to write and publish professional articles or books. It examines 8 important topics and offers sound advice about ways to earn the acceptance of publishers.



What It Means To Be an Author

The major defining characteristic of an author is obvious, yet frequently overlooked: authors write. It matters little whether you are a parent, a college student, a classroom teacher, a program supervisor, a college faculty member or an administrator. At some point, whether you are working alone, with a partner or on a team, somebody has to generate text—a newsletter, manual, funding proposal or article—and polish the manuscript until it shines.

Anyone who succeeds as an author recognizes that writing well requires time,

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patience and thoughtfulness. Upon finishing a series of research studies on writing, Boice (1995) concluded that the attitude of unsuccessful authors was best characterized by the following statement: "I want my writing to be fast, easy, and brilliant" (p. 421). Conversely, those who succeeded in publishing their work were found to:

- prepare thoroughly and work patiently
- write daily instead of in binges
- select manageable writing tasks
- know when to stop and return the next day
- switch to related tasks (e.g., take notes on reading, prepare the bibliography) when the writing seems blocked
- find ways to simulate a reading audience (e.g., talk with colleagues, share drafts)
- analyze their own work habits and strive to build personal resilience. (Boice, 1995)

Tasks that are most closely associated with the creative side of producing a manuscript—generating the text, conceptualizing the material, interpreting research data, and rewriting or editing—merit authorship. On the other hand, support roles that do not demand creative leadership or substantive contributions—locating related materials at the library, entering data into the computer, reviewing a manuscript, and performing minor rewrites or edits—are not sufficient to warrant recognition as an author or co-author. Such minor roles are typically recognized with an acknowledgment in the published work.

Thus, the educator/author is the one who not only possesses, but also carries out innovative ideas by transforming them into publishable pieces. The famous author E. L.

Doctorow put it bluntly: "Planning to write is not writing. Outlining a book is not writing. Researching is not writing. Talking to people about what you're doing, none of that is writing. Writing is writing." Ultimately, it is the act of writing that defines the writer.

When a work is published, the definition of author takes on another dimension—that of credit for authorship. The word *author* has its origins in a Latin word that means *to create.* According to the American Educational Research Association (1991), authorship is reserved for those "who have made a substantive and creative contribution to the generation of an intellectual product" (p. 33).

It is no mere coincidence that the word *authority* has *author* in it. Readers of professional publications expect writers to know their topic well and to cite the work of respected scholars in support of their assertions. Unlike creative writers/artists, such as novelists or poets, who are expected to invent new forms, teachers/scholars who write nonfiction can "stand on the shoulders of giants" by reviewing the literature and referring to it in their own work. Successful educators/authors meticulously record any direct quotes by noting the source and the page number.

> *"Mainly, I write because I want to be helpful. After I have struggled with an educational issue, read about it extensively, tried out various solutions, and talked it over with people I trust, I want to do what I can to give others a head start and save them the trouble of starting at the very beginning as I did."*
>
> Mary Renck Jalongo

Avoid using secondary sources—someone else's interpretation of an original work. Why? Because it is like

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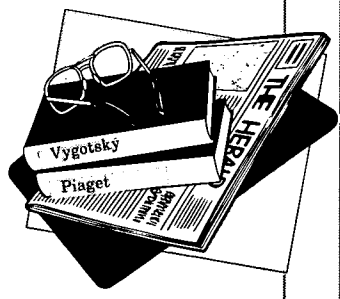
"Writing for me is its own reward. I find it to be therapeutic. It's hard work, but I like to put my ideas together and see them in print. Besides, my mother, who is now in her 80s, still hangs my publications on her refrigerator door."

Louise Swiniarski

that old game of whispering a sentence from one person to the next around a circle, then checking to see how much the final message deviates from the original one.

People who are not detail-oriented in other realms of their professional lives learn to value precision in their writing. Errors can be easily introduced along the way when printed sources are transcribed or when words are moved at the touch of a button. Misspelling another author's name will not be appreciated. Remember, computer software that checks spelling has limitations. It will not catch the worst mistakes, such as a wrong word that is correctly spelled (e.g., "there" for "their"). Also, it will not pick up on missing words, as in the manuscript that reads, "Developmentally appropriate practice is a panacea" when the authors meant to say, "Developmentally appropriate practice is *not* a panacea." Additionally, authors have several significant responsibilities that include:

- stating the purpose of the manuscript
- reporting information accurately
- communicating with an audience
- revising the work until it flows
- using criticism to improve the work
- adhering to the outlet's guidelines
- proofreading the final copy.



How To Prepare To Write

"Writing, by nature, is a complex, unwieldy enterprise made up of numerous stages—thinking, organizing, presenting, polishing, and so forth—each stage calling for different skills and a different mental approach" (Tarshis, 1985, p. 14). As a result of these multiple demands, educators need to do several things in order to become published authors.

Read voraciously. *First, and foremost, writers need to read extensively from the best that the literature has to offer. This reading should be of three types: 1)* content reading *that enables writers to choose and*

explore topics they care about, including information from disciplines outside of education that contribute to deeper understandings; 2) *style reading* that focuses on the ways in which pieces of writing are crafted and 3) *"paper mentor" reading* that offers advice and encouragement for their writing efforts.

Persist at the task of writing. Second, writers need regular chunks of time in order to minimize angst. Novelist Annie Dillard (1989) explains why:

> If you skip a visit or two, a work in progress will turn on you. A work in progress quickly becomes feral. It reverts to a wild state overnight. It is barely domesticated, a mustang on which you one day fastened a halter, but which now you cannot catch. As the work grows, it gets harder to control: it is a lion growing in strength. You must visit it every day and reassert your mastery over it. If you skip a day, you are, quite rightly, afraid to open the door to its room. You enter its room with bravura, holding a chair at the thing and shouting, "Simba!" (p. 52)

Just as the master carver would not expect to produce a figure from wood in an instant, those who master the craft of writing have learned to slowly chip away, allowing the characteristics of the material to suggest the shape of the text.

Establish a network. Most writers need to know others who write and to build networks of authors who can read and critically evaluate their work. As Bruner (1988) has pointed out, much of the learning that we accomplish as adults takes the form of a dialogue between the more and the less experienced. This dynamic interaction about a piece of text is particularly important for writers of nonfiction whose work is intended to inform, persuade or enlighten. Such readers serve as both representative members of the audience and "instant editors." The most sensible route to publication is to revise on

the basis of others' feedback prior to submitting your manuscript. About 95 percent of the manuscripts that are eventually published in professional journals have been revised, even *after* they were accepted (Chesebro, 1993).

Build motivation. What motivates a person to become a writer? Calkins (1985) contends that

> We write to make our truths beautiful, to frame and hold cherished moments. We write also to learn: to recall, plan, organize, and map, to connect old ideas and to discover new ones. We write to teach ourselves and others what it is that we know. (p. 26)

Connect writing with work. Although the conflict between research and writing is genuine (Hattie & Marsh, 1997; McCaughey, 1993), those of us who teach as our life's work can make writing a way of improving our teaching (Boice, 1995). Most college-level textbooks began as class notes and class

Sources of Motivation for Writers

Most writers seek to achieve some combination of the following goals:

- To communicate important ideas
- To tell their stories
- To connect with a wider audience
- To make a contribution to the field
- To obtain tangible rewards (e.g., tenure, promotion, consulting work)
- To enlarge, extend and organize thinking
- To maintain and enhance learning about a topic of interest
- To establish and participate in professional networks
- To be heard and engage in the discourse of the education community
- To develop and be recognized for expertise in a particular area
- To create synergy—positive energy—in their professional lives
- To improve teaching by writing instructional materials or conducting classroom research.

activities for a particular course that the author teaches. Most books of ideas for classroom teachers began as teaching themes, projects, plans or observations. For educators, the connection between writing and teaching can be exceptionally strong, so that writing and classroom practice improve one another.

Learn to use the writer's tools. Aspiring authors sometimes feel tyrannized by the writer's tools—words, sentences and grammatical structures. Perhaps they learned to feel ashamed of their writing attempts and inevitable mistakes in the face of harsh criticism. Just as master teachers learn to trust their students and their instincts, however, writers learn to trust words. Author Georgia Heard (1995) uses the metaphor of tapping the wall before hanging a mirror, listening for the solid sound of the wooden stud beneath:

> When I heard the sound of my tapping change, I positioned the nail and hammered it in, confident that the mirror wouldn't fall down. As I read over words I've written, I tap my sentences in much the same way. Sometimes the sound is hollow—my language is vague or I've used a cliché or the verbs lie passively. The writing there is not as strong as the rest. My first instinct is to get rid of it, cut the weak spot out, throw it away where I will never have to see it again. But I've learned that when I come across these hollow spots perhaps I need to listen harder, put my ear up to the wall again and try to discover what might be inside. (p. 123)

LEARNING THE CRAFT OF WRITING

Part of the process of becoming a writer is demystifying the process. It is often assumed that the good writer's mind operates like a word processing program that scrolls through text, with line after line of well-crafted sentences appearing almost effortlessly. More often than not, however, nonfiction writers of distinction begin with a jumble of ideas and write to figure out what they want to say.

> Even for a professional writer, very few sentences come out right the first time, or even the second or third time. Almost every sentence has some flaw: it's not clear; it could mean several things; it's not logical; it's cluttered with unnecessary words or phrases; it has too many words that are long and lifeless; it is pretentious; it lacks rhythm. These are the problems that a writer systematically attacks. (Zinsser, 1994, p. 25)

Another common misconception is that writing is a mechanical skill—an orderly, error-free arrangement of words. The opposing view is that writing is pure inspiration. Writing nonfiction for professional publication in education is neither pure inspiration nor pure skill. It is a craft that can be learned only from painstaking effort, and improved through various forms of apprenticeship: between more- and less-experienced authors, between authors and reviewers, between authors and editors.

Considerable confusion exists about how writing is learned. Some say, "Writing is learned purely by writing," while others say, "Writing is learned mainly through instruction." In truth, most writers learn from both, first by reading other people's writing, and then by having someone painstakingly show them the way through evolving drafts of a manuscript.

> *"Miss Jackson, my 5th-grade teacher, told me I was a born writer, but she was wrong. I was born wanting to write, but writers are not born, they learn to write by writing, and writing, and writing, and writing, and writing and . . ."*
>
> Shirley Raines

Famous writers' bizarre behaviors are often repeated and reported as testimonial to their creative genius. Even uncelebrated authors admit to rituals such as writing only on legal pads, working only when fresh from

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sleep, or using E-mail to send text back and forth to a co-author. One theory is that writers behave unconventionally because they are engaging in an activity over which they feel they have no rational means of control, at least at first (Becker & Richards, 1986). At the very least, the writer is experiencing circuitry overload because there are so many levels at which a manuscript is written and edited—content, flow, cadence, style and mechanics, to name just a few. All things considered, writing is unavoidably chaotic, and perpetually challenging. Some peculiarities about the nature of writing process include:

- Authors surprise themselves by what they write. Writing is thinking, not thoughts recorded.
- Authors discover how much they know, rather than how little they know, by writing.
- If writers learn how to listen to the evolving draft, the text will teach them how it should be written.
- The authors' voices on the page reveal what they think and how they feel. (Murray, 1990, p. xiii)

Another contradictory set of commonly held beliefs about writing is that talented authors either find ecstasy through writing or, conversely, are tortured souls. Once again, both—or neither—can be accurate. When writing flows it can be enjoyable and when it is stalled or a deadline looms large, it can be frustrating. Dillard (1989) captures this negative side of writing when she remarks, "I do not so much write a book as sit up with it, as with a dying friend. During visiting hours, I enter its room with dread and sympathy for its many disorders. I hold its hand and hope it will get better" (p. 54). Indeed, this is the fervent hope of every author: that the writing truly will get better.

CHARACTERISTICS OF HIGH QUALITY WRITING

Imagine leafing through an issue of a professional journal. What characteristics of an article would cause a reader to:

- *stop and begin reading a particular article?*
- *become annoyed and move on to another article?*
- *request permission to duplicate the article for use in a class or a workshop?*
- *write a letter to the editor that remarks favorably (or unfavorably) on the article?*

As Macrorie (1985) notes, while quality in writing may be difficult to define, it is

possible to identify its characteristics: "Most good writing is clear, vigorous, honest, alive, sensuous, appropriate, unsentimental, rhythmic, without pretension, fresh, metaphorical, evocative in sound, economical, authoritative, surprising, memorable, and light" (p. 29).

One of the most profound influences on the quality of writing is *mastering the art of writing for a particular audience*. Beginning

WAYS TO GET STARTED

- **Write something small.** Many editors are seeking descriptions of successful classroom ideas (such as *Childhood Education*'s "Idea Sparkers"), accounts of personal/professional experiences (such as *The Reading Teacher*'s "Literacy Stories"), book reviews, letters to the editor or brief research summaries. You also might try writing an annotated bibliography on a timely topic.
- **Choose a less competitive outlet.** There are literally hundreds of education publications and many of the less-widely circulated publications are actively seeking manuscripts. Consider your association newsletters, state or regional journals, newly established publications or publications that have higher acceptance rates (see Cabell, 1995; Henson, 1995).
- **Write with an established author.** Work with an experienced writer to get an insider's view of how the publication process works. A powerful combination is a professor who knows the theory/research and a teacher who can field test ideas and gather samples of children's work.
- **Imitate the "masters."** Just as painters often mimic the classics before developing their own style, new authors can locate a masterful manuscript, study the structure and use it as a "template" for an original article.
- **Volunteer to be a reviewer.** Reading others' work is a good way to gain insight into your own. Not only is it a way to critically examine "what works," it also enables you to internalize what editors are really seeking.
- **Set a manageable goal.** Commit to just one article per year, then raise your level of expectations accordingly.

authors can become self-absorbed, wondering aloud, "What should I write?" or "Do I have what it takes to become an author?" This is similar to student teachers worrying so much about fulfilling the teaching role that they miss important opportunities for furthering students' learning. Writers must get "past themselves" and instead focus on the intended audience's needs.

> *"When I was 20, I tried to write by quoting great philosophers. When I was 30, I tried to write by quoting great theorists. When I was 40, I tried to write by quoting great researchers. Now that I am 50, I quote great teachers."*
>
> Shirley Raines

Although it is common for the novice author to insist that "everyone will want to read it!" manuscripts that are written *for* a particular audience are more sharply focused and therefore more successful. For example, a novice writer might inquire of an editor, "Are you interested in an article about conflict resolution?" The real answer would be, "That is a book, not an article." A better, more audience-focused approach might result in a question such as, "Are you interested in an article that helps parents understand the reasons for teaching conflict resolution to children in the elementary grades?" Now, the audience is identified and the focus is clearer.

A second major influence on quality in nonfiction writing is *being ever mindful of the reasons why busy professionals stop whatever else they are doing and take the time to read what you have written*. Any education author of distinction writes to address the five main reasons why people read works of

nonfiction: 1) to use the material in their own work, 2) to validate and support their own beliefs, 3) to have something to talk about, 4) to exercise their minds and 5) to improve their situations (Casewit, 1985). Virtually every well-received and widely read manuscript is replete with evidence that the author has been considerate of readers' motives for reading rather than being preoccupied with her or his own agenda as an author.

WRITING WELL ENOUGH

A child who was asked why he liked working with computers so much, stated simply, "Because I'm good at it." The same holds true for writing; a blend of confidence and competence forges a successful commitment to writing.

> Remember that you are never "ready" to write; writing is something you must make a conscious decision to do and then discipline yourself to follow through. People often tell us that we are lucky; they say, "Writing comes so easy to you." Writing comes easy neither to us nor to many others; it is hard work. As one author put it, "Writing is easy, all you do is sit staring at the blank sheet of paper until drops of blood form on your forehead." Some become more proficient at it because they have developed good work patterns, confidence, and skills, but it is never easy. (Bogdan & Biklen, 1992, p. 172)

Writing presents an interesting dilemma; people who only think or talk about writing "someday" never get any better at writing. They are like a hopeful diver poised on the edge of the board who keeps asking, "Do you think I have potential?" Until the person dives in, no one can say. Writers have to take some chances with writing and be willing to operate for a time

in "a twilight zone of uncertainty and chaos" if they are to improve (Tarshis, 1982, p. 14).

> *"There are a lot of inspired people who have magnificent thoughts, but they are stingy, they keep them to themselves; or lazy, they never get around to writing them down. To be a writer, one must be giving and industrious, generous enough to give away one's best thoughts."*
>
> Shirley Raines

Although some people seem to have a natural flair for writing, individuals who are innately talented as writers are about as rare as overnight successes in the entertainment field. More often than not, admired writers have been working for decades to improve their writing and readers recognize their talents long after they have learned from their mistakes. Anyone who can think clearly and has mastered the fundamentals of composition can learn to write well enough—after a dozen or more revisions—to become a published nonfiction author/educator.

> *"Trendiness can be both seductive and dangerous. Although manuscripts that address timely issues are always welcome, new writers need to be careful of spreading themselves too thin. Writers who are continually swayed by 'hot topics' may find that they have divested their professional energies in too many different directions, and find it difficult to give a thoughtful, well-researched, and in-depth treatment to any single issue."*
>
> Patricia A. Crawford

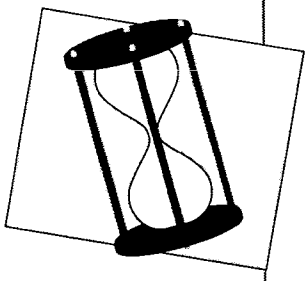
Educators often express an interest in writing a book "after retirement." They assume that free time is the only impediment to producing a book. If a person never has ventured into professional writing throughout an entire career, developing

confidence and skills along the way, he or she cannot be expected to write anything, much less a book.

Another category of nonwriters are those who set nearly impossible standards for themselves in their initial writing attempts. Instead of beginning with manageable tasks, such as writing a short article or book review, they plan to propose a new theory that will revolutionize the field, publish in a journal with a 3 percent acceptance rate, or write the leading college textbook in a field dominated by several textbook dynasties that are approaching double-digit editions. This is not to say that such accomplishments never occur. For most educators, however, it is unrealistic to expect admission into such competitive circles when their experience with writing for publication is in its infancy.

"Remember that writing is an opportunity to make a difference . . . with children, with teachers, with families, and with the profession."
Janet Brown McCracken

Those who make the writing commitment learn to take criticism and use it (Markland, 1983). They regard even less-than-enthusiastic responses as opportunities to improve as a writer, rather than as ego threats. The truth is that widely published authors are experts at rebounding from and responding appropriately to recommendations for improvement from colleagues, peer reviewers and editors. Although every author dreams of a response that goes something like, "It's absolutely perfect. Don't change a word. We'll publish it immediately," such a response (for most of us, anyway) remains just that, an unfulfilled dream.



Making Time To Write

Another frequently asked question published authors hear is, "Where do you find the time?" Writers have no more time than anyone else—everyone gets the standard 24 hours in a day. The issue, then, is how one allocates time—a conscious decision on the part of each individual. Why does anyone make a monumental effort to set aside time for anything, from reading a bedtime story to a child to becoming an outstanding teacher? Usually, it is because the person believes it is possible to perform the task at least

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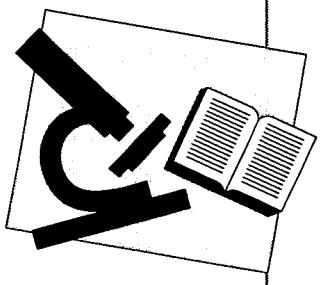
> *"The most successful and prolific writers I know are not those who write quickly, but rather those who write thoughtfully, deliberately and consistently. Writing is a priority for them, a regular part of their professional routine."*
>
> Patricia A. Crawford

adequately and that the results will be worth the effort. Therefore, finding the time to write is less of a time issue and more of a success issue. To illustrate, imagine that a publisher guaranteed that the work an aspiring author had in mind would be published and well-received. Who would "find" the time then?

FINDING THE TIME TO WRITE

- Start writing notes immediately instead of waiting until your ideas are more fully developed.
- Find a workspace where you and your papers are unlikely to be disturbed.
- Equip your work area with all of the necessary materials and resources.
- Give up watching television.
- Always keep a notebook or a voice-activated microcassette recorder with you to capture your ideas.
- Do two things at once, such as exercising and writing/dictating text.
- Use otherwise wasted time, such as sitting in a doctor's office, at an airport or in a traffic jam, to write or dictate ideas.
- Write whenever your students are writing in class to model a commitment to writing.
- Block out 2-3 hours each weekend when you are unlikely to be interrupted.



FOCUSING ON THE TOPIC

Let the topic choose its author. The choice may be a blend of formal education, personal/professional experience, intense interest and special talents. Calkins (1985) advises authors to consider, "What are the things that you know and care about?" Do not be discouraged by the "know" part, however. It is not necessary to be the world's leading authority on a topic in order to write about it. In fact, one motivation for writing is to contribute to one's own learning and become an expert on a topic through intensive study.

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Editors of professional journals often report that the material submitted for review by college faculty is too theoretical or abstract to be of much use to the

DISCOVERING IDEAS TO WRITE ABOUT

- **Scan journals for ideas.** Look for calls for manuscripts, annual theme lists, plans for edited collections, and so forth.
- **Read for ideas.** Make notes as you read others' work—argue with the text, think of new classroom applications or think of a different audience for something similar.
- **Talk for ideas.** Discuss your writing ideas with trusted colleagues to clarify thinking and reveal "holes" in your argument.
- **Attend meetings for ideas.** Pick up calls for manuscripts from various journals or calls for papers already presented at conferences to be published as conference proceedings. Publish your conference paper as an ERIC document—you can publish it in a journal later without any conflict of interest. Study conference programs to identify issues that are being discussed long before they appear in print. Attend sessions on topics of interest and stay after a session to talk with the presenter.
- **Listen for ideas.** Use material from class discussions, problems that are raised at departmental meetings, or questions posed to speakers at conferences.
- **Collaborate for ideas.** Work with children to collect examples of their drawing and writing for an article, and work with pre- or inservice teachers or professionals from other fields to make the manuscript more practical.
- **Write for ideas.** Draw concept maps of your topic, brainstorm lists of ideas, play with possible manuscript titles, freewheel on the computer or keep a professional journal.
- **Dust off old material for ideas.** Review old graduate class notes, previous conference presentations, lesson plans or classroom observations to identify interesting juxtapositions and combinations of ideas.

Adapted from Reynolds (1991)

organization's general membership. Consequently, classroom teachers who write or who collaborate with college faculty are widely sought as authors (Dahl, 1992; Greenwood, 1991; Jalongo & Isenberg, 1995).

Authors sometimes conclude that the only way to get something published is to select a hot topic, one that is appearing everywhere in journals and books. If this were the case, however, many high-quality manuscripts would be rejected by editors simply because of oversupply and the need to balance content. One distinguishing feature of quality manuscripts is timelessness. Trendy topics tend to become outdated and therefore are less likely to represent an enduring contribution to the literature. Most of the time, the author's task is, as Samuel Johnson once said, "to make new things familiar and familiar things new."

When selecting a topic, consider these ABC's of subject selection (Adelstein & Pival, 1976):

Appeal—	Is the topic interesting to the author and the audience? Is the content or approach innovative?
Breadth—	Can the topic be treated properly and adequately in the manuscript format selected? Does the topic need to be focused more narrowly?
Complexity—	How much does the audience already know about the subject? What amount of explanation/ illustration will be sufficient?

Published writing in the education field definitely has a thesis. As Howard and Barton (1986) point out, no matter how many facts, details or explanations are presented, a manuscript needs a thesis statement in order to be

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publishable. Any author who cannot state this thesis in a sentence or two does not have a clear idea for a subject.

Few published manuscripts merely report; they also take a stand that persuades, enlightens or challenges the readers to think more deeply about an issue. Generally speaking, this means that the author assembles evidence that supports a precisely formulated opinion; "it means raising a precise question . . . and attempting to answer it" (Howard & Barton, 1986, p. 48).

"I write because teachers and librarians who attended my presentations and took courses with me told me that I needed to write. During the question-and-answer session at the end of conference presentations, I was often asked, 'Do you have a book of these ideas?' Invariably, at the end of a course, some student would say, 'Dr. Raines, my sister (or other family member) teaches. I've been telling her about your class. Have you written a book that I can give her to read?' Finally, I can say, 'Yes.'"

Shirley Raines

This does not imply, however, that manuscripts should be fired off like letters to the editor or written in the language of an exposé, purely for the purpose of attracting attention. Scholarly articles and books need to present a well-reasoned, carefully documented view that recognizes the existence of other perspectives on the issue, rather than presenting one viewpoint as the absolute truth.

Knowing this, how should an author introduce a manuscript? Examine the first paragraph of several enjoyable articles. Usually, they begin with a short

anecdote or narrative, a thought-provoking definition, an interesting fact or statistic, relevant background material, an analogy, a concessive statement that recognizes an opinion or approach different from the thesis, a question or list of questions, an interesting paradox, or a statement of long-term effect or effects (the cause of which is stated later). The classic structure of an essay begins with a broad, brief introduction, then quickly narrows toward the manuscript's point (the thesis). Often, this structure is represented graphically as an inverted triangle.

The next paragraph is referred to as the pronouncement paragraph. This is where the author succinctly previews the major portions of the manuscript, such as the following:

> The purpose of this article is to describe how the classroom environment can be changed to encourage play which, in turn, may increase and promote literacy activity among children during their preschool and kindergarten years. First, we present our rationale: that the design of classroom environments can positively influence literacy development. Second, we describe an experiment conducted to test this hypothesis. Third, we present the results of the study. Finally, we discuss classroom applications of our research. (Morrow & Rand, 1991, p. 396)

The middle of a manuscript typically is arranged around major points, indicated by headings and subheadings. These headings function as road signs that guide the readers through the writer's argument. They enable readers to quickly scan an article and decide whether or not they want to read it. Take a look at the articles that appear in the publications where you aspire to publish your own work. Chances are, you will find that the authors made use of headings and subheadings, numbered or bulleted lists, boldface or italics, concise paragraphs, figures, tables, charts and samples of children's work. If so, you should strive to format

"People tend to talk about writing books in the present or the future—'I am writing a book' or 'I want to write a book someday'—when what most of us really *want is to be able to use the past tense and say, 'I have written a book.' For me, one of the most enjoyable moments in writing is receiving a published article or book in the mail. I immediately take the huge pile of paper consisting of 12 (or more) revisions of the manuscript and drop them into the recycle bin with a satisfying thump. My office is (momentarily) less cluttered and I relish the thought that what was once a jumble of books marked with sticky notes, journal articles copied at the library, and word processed pages with handwritten revisions is now a typeset, finished product. Then I look through the book and think about how I might improve it the next time around ."'*

Mary Renck Jalongo

your manuscript in similar ways.

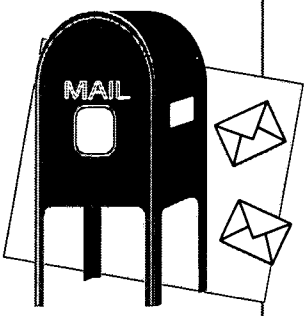
Most articles, chapters and books conclude with a section that could be visualized as a right-side-up triangle; it returns to the thesis (represented by the point of the triangle) and expands to the larger view (represented by the base of the triangle). A satisfying conclusion usually alludes to the introduction, summarizes the main points in the body of the paper and returns to a broader view or future goal for the overall argument.

HOW TO PRESENT A LOGICAL ARGUMENT

Remember to:

- Clearly state the argument and define the key terminology.
- Provide readers with a succinct preview of your strategy at the outset.
- Limit the argument to the question at hand. Do not go off on tangents.
- Present adequate evidence to support the argument, maintaining a sharp focus. Do not cite sources simply because they were read recently.
- Reason logically, providing illustrative examples to make your main points clear.
- Anticipate contrary arguments and evidence and address them directly.

Adapted from Millward (1980)



Where To Find Suitable Outlets

"We wish you success in finding a suitable outlet for your work." So reads the standard rejection letter used by many publishers. What, exactly, does this mean?

In many instances, work is rejected purely because it does not suit the particular audience and style of the intended publication. Bernstein (1986) estimates that nearly 80 percent of manuscripts in the mail are on the way to the wrong outlet. This occurs primarily because authors do not thoroughly familiarize themselves with the types of material a particular publisher produces.

Successful authors look for a good match between the written work and the publisher to whom it is sent for review. Every journal, textbook publisher and scholarly publisher has certain audiences in mind or a particular niche to fill. In the haste to get something into the mail, authors may overlook even the most obvious mismatches, such as sending a manuscript about middle school children to an early childhood publication. The same principle applies to textbooks. If virtually no courses would adopt a book like the one an author intends to write, then textbook publishers are apt to politely refuse.

> *"A major help in getting published is to understand the publications process of professional organizations. For example, at ACEI, the annual meeting always has a Publications Forum for sharing your ideas. In addition, ACEI has a brochure* (Publishing Opportunities with ACEI) *that outlines numerous publication opportunities for potential authors."*
>
> James Hoot

Just as a runner would study the course before attempting to run a marathon, successful authors study things such as a professional journal's statement of purpose (found in what is referred to as the masthead), table of contents and article style. Similarly, authors who aspire to publish a book should examine current book catalogs, chat with editors at conference booths, study textbooks that have held up through several editions, and read the publisher's guidelines for writing a book prospectus (for more on book publishing, see Henson, 1990; 1995; Herman & Adams, 1993).

Successful authors get into the habit of reading for style, not just for content. Look at the structure of a piece of writing and analyze what makes the manuscript flow and communicate well, whether it is an article in an in-flight magazine, a child's original story or an educational book that made it to *The New York Times* bestseller list. Study form and style, including how the thesis is stated, how headings and subheadings are used, and how figures, tables, charts and graphs add to readability. Copy particularly good (or bad!) examples of writing and save them for later reference on what to do and what to avoid.

This approach makes quality writing a continuing project instead of an onerous, last-minute obligation. In addition, seek professional development opportunities in writing, such as sessions on writing for publication at major conferences, distance learning courses, writers' workshops, or presentations by accomplished authors who are discussing their works. With determination and a large measure of humility, authors can always learn more about the world of writing for publication.

TYPES OF PUBLICATIONS

In general, journal and book publishers emphasize one or more of the following types of publications:

- ***Practical articles and books***—publications that strive to apply research and theory to situations that practitioners in the field face. Examples of education journals that typically publish practical articles are *Childhood Education, Dimensions of Early Childhood, Young Children, Early Childhood Education Journal* and *The Reading Teacher.*

In book publishing, Prentice Hall and Allyn & Bacon specialize in undergraduate-level textbooks, while Gryphon House, Teacher Ideas Press, Redleaf Press, SkyLight Press and National Educational Service specialize in curriculum materials.

- ***Empirical research***—journal articles and scholarly books that report the results of original research. Quantitative studies typically are organized by headings, such as abstract, introduction, subjects, method/ procedures, results, discussion and implications. Qualitative research more often takes the form of case studies, interviews, narrative research and various types of educational ethnography. Examples of journals that primarily publish empirical research are *Journal of Research in Childhood Education*, *Child Development*, *Early Childhood Research Quarterly* and *Reading Research Quarterly*. Book publishers that favor manuscripts with a more scholarly style include Sage, Teachers College Press, Jossey-Bass and various university presses.
- ***Review or theoretical articles and books***—short and long publications that synthesize and critically evaluate material that already has been published. The book review sections of *Childhood Education* or *Young Children* are good examples of articles that evaluate published material. The regular features called "Research in Review" in *Childhood Education* and "Reviews of Research" in *Young Children* synthesize and evaluate research on a particular topic. The American Educational Research Association's quarterly publication *Reviews of Educational Research* also offers excellent examples of how to write an integrative review.

• ***Association publications***—brochures, pamphlets and monographs that are produced by various education organizations, such as the Association for Childhood Education International, the Association for Supervision and Curriculum Development, the National Association for the Education of Young Children, the National Council of Teachers of Mathematics and the National Education Association. These organizations usually are interested in manuscripts that synthesize theory and research for their membership.

TYPES OF MANUSCRIPTS

Authors who are trying to decide which type of manuscript to *write* would do well to consider what type of manuscript they generally prefer to *read*. Familiarity with the form and style of manuscripts for journals or books is a tremendous asset for the writer.

Janet Brown McCracken suggests that a publishable manuscript . . .

- is suitable for the intended audience
- is clear and concise
- is logically organized
- contains original, interesting material
- reports and documents information accurately
- uses specific examples to illustrate key concepts
- is well-written and authoritatively presented
- conveys warmth and enthusiasm for children and learning
- conforms to the publisher's style requirements
- advances knowledge in the field.

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When writing for publication in most professional journals, remember that teachers, not professors, are the main audience. Therefore, authors "need to make sure that their manuscripts have interest, value, and relevance for practitioners" (Spooner & Heller, 1993, p. 47). It is generally a waste of time and paper to produce and submit manuscripts that sound like written lecture notes or political speeches, or that use a formal, stilted, dissertation style of writing. Becoming well-acquainted with the journal or book publisher, its audience, and the range of materials that it publishes enables authors to minimize the number of outright rejections they receive.

"When it comes to improving chances of getting published, understand that criticism is a 'kindness.' Get someone (or several friends) to be 'kind' to you in responding to your manuscript prior to sending out for review and publication. Never send out a manuscript that has not been reviewed by at least three kind colleagues."

James Hoot

Authors should make it their business to know as much as possible about a publishing outlet before submitting a manuscript. Leaf through journal issues from the past 2 or 3 years to get a sense of what is being published. That way, you will know if a topic has been overworked or underrepresented lately, and be able to make decisions accordingly.

FINE-TUNING A MANUSCRIPT

Think of the journal or book catalog as a "textbook" for studying what a particular outlet is likely to be seeking and where a specific manuscript might fit. Then, tailor everything to that outlet. Throughout the writing process, an author needs to consider many details.

Maintain meticulous references. *If a source cited in the text was omitted inadvertently from the reference list, it is far*

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better to go back and track it down immediately, rather than to do so in frantic response to an editor's last-minute request. If a chapter from an edited book was cited in the text, but the inclusive page numbers were not recorded in the references (as required in APA style), the same advice applies. Accepted authors will be asked to supply page numbers, even if the book was on interlibrary loan and is no longer accessible. If a page number for a direct quotation is missing, the editor will ask for it—which may mean skimming through the entire book again.

Target examples and style. Make sure that the examples speak to the article's audience. Manuscripts intended for families should be relatively free of jargon and describe situations with which diverse families can identify.

Edit. Helen Keller once remarked that if she had lived longer, she would have written less—not in the sense of fewer writing projects, but rather by taking more time to revise and revise again until her writing was more concise.

Novice writers mistakenly assume that all they really need to write well is to hire an English composition expert to correct spelling, grammar and sentence structure. Although it is true that these things require attention, the writing and referencing style in English literature differ considerably from that of educational writing. Each field has its own way of communicating ideas and the best way to become familiar with it is to read extensively in the field. Pay attention to the format of the published manuscripts in the outlet chosen for the manuscript. Does it use headings? Do the articles and books include figures, tables, charts or graphs? Are samples of children's work included? If so, do likewise.

LEARN TO SELF-EDIT

- **Let it cool down/look it over.** Come back to the manuscript when it is no longer fresh. This will increase your objectivity as you will no longer be completely familiar with the text. Mark the rough spots, correct most and come back to the others later.
- **Listen to the sound of it.** Read the manuscript out loud or use computer software that will. If the reader falters, it needs work. If it takes a deep breath to read a sentence, the sentence is probably too long. Good writing has an appealing cadence and rhythm.
- **Examine each paragraph.** Normally, each paragraph functions like a tidy package that begins with a topic sentence, followed with discussion/evidence/details, and concludes by summarizing and/or making a transition to the next section. Check the structure of each paragraph.
- **Analyze the sentence length.** Choose a paragraph and examine the length of each sentence. Go back through, rewriting so that some sentences are long, some are medium and a few are short. Varied sentence length helps to avoid monotonous, plodding prose.
- **Visualize it.** Try to imagine what pictures are being created in the reader's mind with the words. If a research project or a special program is being described, the audience should share a mental image of it.
- **Add specifics.** Prose becomes dull and flat when one general idea after another is pitched at the reader. Add a surprising fact, some statistical evidence, an interesting anecdote or a concrete example. As editor Jack Frymeir once observed, all good writing moves back and forth between the general and the specific.
- **Find a structure.** A manuscript that is beautifully crafted is balanced. It does not include one point that goes on for three pages and another point that only requires three sentences. Look closely at a well-crafted manuscript: It skillfully weaves together theory, research and practice. Too often, beginning writers choose the most obvious (and boring) organizational patterns, such as putting all of the concrete examples in one section instead of interspersing them throughout. One formula for the body of a manuscript is example + literature review + recommendation (see Jalongo, 1995).
- **Cut it down.** Probably the most common place where cutting is needed is the introduction. Editors and reviewers are concerned about available space and the expense of publishing manuscripts. They want a manuscript that gets to the point quickly and states its purpose succinctly. If authors are brutally honest about those opening lines (or pages), these words are often just a way of warming up. Get rid of the excess before submitting the work.

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Too often, authors get impatient with a work and send it off expecting the editor to straighten it out for them. They imagine editors cheerfully investing hours of work on the manuscript because it contains brilliant ideas and holds such promise. A poorly wrought manuscript is the equivalent of a "fixer upper" in real estate. It takes a unique set of circumstances for an editor to be interested in a reclamation project, including the time, inclination, patience, talent and an undersupply of high-quality manuscripts on that topic—and the manuscript would need to be good enough to earn the reviewers' endorsement in the first place!

"Don't be satisfied with your first draft. Fine-tune your manuscript—write, rewrite, rewrite! Aim for clarity of expression, using simple, direct language. Avoid long, convoluted sentences that serve only to obscure your meaning and confuse the reader."

Lucy Prete Martin

Yale professor Robert Sternberg (1993) speaks candidly about this variety of self-delusion among writers when he comments:

> Sometimes when I am writing an article, I notice a sentence or paragraph that isn't clear. Occasionally, I'm too lazy to change the offending text and I hope no one will notice. I'm particularly likely to hope that people will know what I mean when I'm not sure myself, so that perhaps later they can tell me. Almost without fail, however, readers don't understand what I said any better than I do. (p. 711)

Writers cannot expect others to clarify muddy prose or sort out muddled thinking. Even when editors or reviewers *can*

make sense out of a confusing manuscript after rereading it several times, they are unlikely to have the time or the patience to do so.

Ask for comments. Far too many authors think that they should write almost secretively, then send a manuscript off to a publisher for review. In reality, even the most widely published and admired authors do not do this. Some ask spouses to read for them, some seek out in-house colleagues who can respond to written work, and others build writers' networks through professional organizations. Those who have reached the status of accomplished authors rely on their publishers to provide several layers of reviewing and editing from professionals skilled in different aspects of writing. In other words, successfully published works are frequently more collaborative than the credit for authorship might lead one to believe.

Beginning authors often find it useful to solicit opinions from several different audiences before submitting a manuscript for editorial review:

- ***A well-read person outside the field.*** This individual can answer the questions: "Is it clear?" and "Does it make sense?" An outsider can recommend ways to improve clarity and limit jargon, thus making the work more accessible to novices in the field.
- ***A content specialist on the topic.*** An expert can give some indication of the manuscript's originality and significance, answering the questions: "Is it new?" "Is it true?" and "Is it important?"
- ***A regular reader of the journal or book publisher for which the work is intended.*** This person need not be a well-known writer, simply an avid reader. He or she can answer the question, "Is this manuscript well suited to the intended audience?"

AN EDITOR'S CRITERIA FOR MANUSCRIPT EVALUATION

CONTENT

Information	Delivers a body of facts. Resources are authoritative. Original research methods are competent. Opinions are supported by information.
Analysis	The facts are organized and examined, not merely enumerated. Concepts or hypotheses are presented that embody the facts and bear the imprint of the author. Difficult concepts are made manageable. Thoughtful interpretation leads one to a pointed overview of the subject. Knowledge (a synthesis of information) as well as raw information is imparted. The article is substantially more than the sum of its sources.
Balance	Opinions are clearly distinguished from fact. More than one side of an argument is presented or at least acknowledged. The reader has a fair chance to judge the reliability of the information.
Originality	Fresh, innovative, insightful. Shows an awareness of earlier thoughts on the subject, as well as an ability to go beyond them.

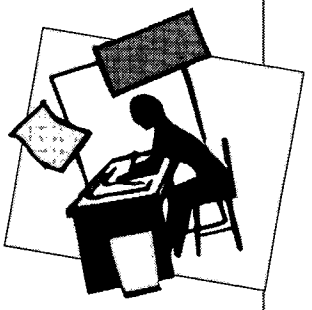
READABILITY

Appeal	From the start, the article is inviting. It intrigues or motivates the reader; it encourages one to go beyond the first page. It sustains interest throughout. Its organization creates a forward momentum. It contains a succession of interesting facts and concepts clearly presented. An authoritative command of the subject promises substantial educational value.
Concreteness and Clarity	It favors the concrete over the abstract. It is free of jargon and turgid rhetoric. It gets to the point. It specifies. It asserts its point of view. It invites dialogue. It offers concrete points of reader identification. It rings with clarity.
Color and Tone	The voice is conversational, but intelligent. It favors active over passive construction, sentences that build on strong verbs. It uses, when appropriate, examples, anecdotes, contrast, irony and wit. Expression is sincere rather than slick. In general, the writing is free of elements that intrude upon the smooth flow of information and ideas to the reader.

IMPACT

Enlightenment	Edifies without preaching. Opens up new channels of action or understanding. Leaves one with a sense of solid benefit. Emotionally as well as intellectually stimulating. Turns on the inner light.
Force	Authoritative and persuasive without being heavy-handed. Intensity of conviction, strength of logic. Shows an awareness of trends, but does not derive its impact from ephemeral fashions and follies. Durable.
Relevance	The article relates directly to current or enduring interests of the specific readership. It rewards, extends or challenges these interests.

Note: From Plotnik, A. (1982). *The elements of editing: A modern guide for editors and journalists* (pp. 28-29). New York: Macmillan, Copyright 1982 by Arthur Plotnik. Reprinted with permission.



What Editors Do

Many professional journal editors are "field editors." They have full-time jobs, usually as college or university faculty, in addition to their editor position. Other editors are freelance, meaning that they depend upon editing jobs with various publishers to pay the bills. Even in the editorial offices of full-time editors for major professional organizations, unlike Hollywood portrayals of editorial offices, the surroundings are far

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from lavish and the staff members few. One editor is frequently responsible for several issues of a journal as well as books, pamphlets and brochures sponsored by the organization.

Just knowing this helps to explain why revising a manuscript at least a dozen times is the surest way to experience success in publishing. As Robert Louis Stevenson once said, "When I say writing, O believe me, it is chiefly rewriting I have in mind."

When interacting with editors, keep in mind that the editor is not the enemy. Although editors do render decisions about manuscripts and serve as gatekeepers, their primary functions are to serve as test readers of manuscripts, to represent the audience and publisher simultaneously, and to produce a high-quality publication (Plotnik, 1982; Speck, 1991).

What is it that editors find most difficult in interactions with authors? Actually, the list is very similar to the one that teachers would generate if asked to enumerate the worst problems with preservice teachers: negligence/shoddy work, failing to meet deadlines, unwillingness to respond appropriately to constructive criticism, and hostile protests when evaluations of work are scrupulously fair.

Beginning writers often mistakenly believe that only well-known editors are capable of providing useful feedback on their work. Remember, however, that the literal meaning of the word revision is "to see again," and even someone who has never published or edited can help a writer do that simply by functioning as a real, live member of the audience. It is much more difficult to edit one's own writing because the author knows what meaning was intended. A careful, critical reader can point out the rough spots, raise questions and enable the author to see the work in another light.

HOW TO EARN ACCEPTANCE FROM REVIEWERS AND EDITORS

What You Say

- Get directly to the point. Assume that most readers will not get past the first page or paragraph if it is garbled or boring.
- Tell or show the readers why they should be interested in your topic/approach. Assume that your audience will include readers who are not as well-informed or passionate about the topic as you are.
- Make sure that the article delivers what the title and introduction promise. Article titles often need to be rewritten after a manuscript is complete to describe more accurately the finished product.
- Present a sharply focused, reasonably complete and balanced review of the literature. When writing for practitioners, weave it throughout the manuscript instead of putting all of the literature review in one section.
- Build to a satisfying conclusion and leave readers with additional food for thought, but do not introduce an issue that was not discussed previously in the manuscript.

How You Say It

- Write sentences that are readable, clear and concise. Keep jargon to a minimum, remembering that at least a portion of your readership will be novices in the field.
- Scrutinize your paper's logical flow and make sure that it has a clear organizational pattern, indicated by headings and subheadings.
- Use direct quotations judiciously. Many readers will skip over a long quotation, so it is generally better to shorten or paraphrase and cite the author's name as the source.
- Learn to tell the tiny tale—intersperse very succinct descriptions of classroom events, children's behavior, teachers' concerns or families' responses throughout your manuscript to maintain readers' interest.
- Remember the journalist's creed: say what you are going to say, say it and then restate what you have said—all without sounding redundant. Write to communicate ideas rather than to impress and sound scholarly. Use a writer's voice that is something like the dinner conversation you would have with a respected colleague on a topic of real significance.

What To Do with What You Say

- Proofread carefully. Reviewers and editors who have many manuscripts to choose from may instantly reject a manuscript that has numerous errors.
- Use the required referencing style. Most professional publications in education use the current edition of American Psychological Association (APA) style. Purchase the guide and refer to it often on all matters of style.
- Conform to the publisher's specific guidelines. Each publication usually has published guidelines for authors that can be obtained by sending a self-addressed, stamped envelope to the editorial offices or on-line. Typically, these guidelines ask for such things as multiple copies (author's name on cover sheet only to facilitate anonymous peer review), a precisely labeled computer diskette, and a self-addressed, stamped envelope.
- Read your paper critically and ask a respected colleague to do the same. When you are convinced that the manuscript is ready to mail out, put it in a drawer for a week and then reread it with a cold, critical eye.

What To Do with What Others Say

- Realize that submitting your manuscript for review invites criticism (Chesebro, 1993). Take reviewers' comments seriously, particularly if more than one reviewer mentions a manuscript flaw or if the editor echoes a suggestion in a letter. Develop a thick skin about your manuscripts rather than taking criticism personally. Approach rewrites as ways to improve an already good manuscript and take it "over the top."
- Remember that writing for publication is not merely a matter of persistence. Work to improve your manuscript, *then* resubmit.

Adapted from Sternberg, 1993

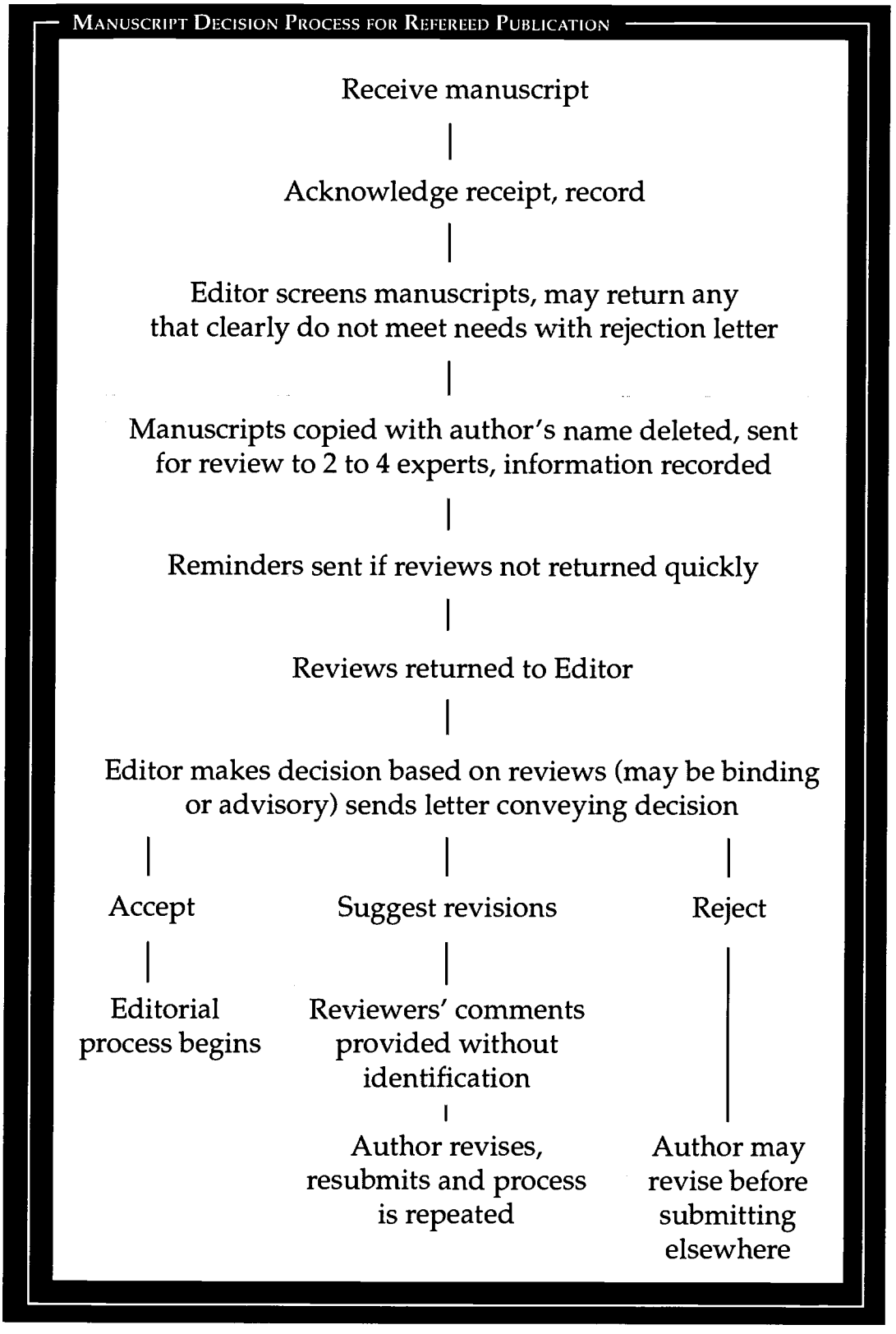
REQUEST PEER REVIEW

One of the most common questions raised at sessions on writing for publication is, "What can I do to prevent someone else from stealing my ideas?" There are several answers to this concern. Most reviewers barely have the time to write about their own ideas, much less someone else's. Authors who are worried about piracy should work with reputable publishers and maintain accurate records of all correspondence.

Publication is intended as a form of communication with a large audience. People who do not want to share ideas do best to keep them to themselves. Actually, publication is one of the best ways to "lay claim" to an idea because subsequent authors will cite related works as sources. Educators who travel around to conferences and talk about their ideas are far more likely to see those ideas appear elsewhere without credit.

Ideas alone (except on the magnitude of a cure for cancer) do not distinguish a manuscript from all the others written on a topic. Publishable manuscripts include a host of good ideas. For example, most published research in prestigious journals reports not on a single study, but rather research on several studies conducted over a period of time (Sternberg, 1993). More often than not, the presentation rather than the idea makes a manuscript publishable. Authors often think they have a brilliant and unique idea for a manuscript, only to find in their literature review that someone else already has written about it.

Most people who review for scholarly publications are themselves writers, researchers, advisers and/or full-time faculty at a university. If it is true that "The chief difference


Manuscript Decision Process for Refereed Publication
Receive manuscript
Acknowledge receipt, record
Editor screens manuscripts, may return any that clearly do not meet needs with rejection letter
Manuscripts copied with author's name deleted, sent for review to 2 to 4 experts, information recorded
Reminders sent if reviews not returned quickly
Reviews returned to Editor
Editor makes decision based on reviews (may be binding or advisory) sends letter conveying decision
Accept
Suggest revisions
Reject
Editorial process begins
Reviewers' comments provided without identification
Author revises, resubmits and process is repeated
Author may revise before submitting elsewhere

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between good writing and better writing is the number of imperceptible hesitations the reader experiences as he goes along" (Kilpatrick, 1984, p. 29), then authors cannot afford to try reviewers' patience by submitting works in progress. Reviewers expect writing to flow so that they do not need to stop to reread and puzzle over what the writer intended.

When a manuscript is reviewed, three basic decisions are possible:

Acceptance. The manuscript requires only minimal revision—changes that can be made during the normal editorial process.

Conditional acceptance. The manuscript has merit, but requires more substantial revision. It will be returned to the author and may or may not go through the review process again. Usually, the reviewers' comments are attached or summarized in a letter from the editor. A copy of the manuscript marked by an especially thorough reviewer is sometimes included along with the general comments.

Rejection. An outright rejection is often signaled by a form letter. The text of such letters reads something like this: "We wish you success in finding a suitable outlet for your work. . . ." This statement is a convenient catch-all for major manuscript flaws. The most common problem is that the manuscript is inappropriate for the outlet. It also may be poorly written and conceptualized. The topic may have received considerable attention in the publication already, or the subject could be regarded by editors and reviewers as trivial.

Nonprofit organizations depend upon volunteer reviewers, who are rarely compensated for the many hours that

they spend reading, critiquing, writing reviews and attending editorial board meetings. Usually, reviewers have little or no financial support for their travel to conferences or meetings. This is the major reason why it is considered to be unethical to submit a manuscript to more than one professional association journal at a time—it robs these busy professionals who are volunteers of their time.

> *"Aspiring authors need to move beyond the common perception of 'editor as antagonist.' In reality, just the opposite is true. Editors are always seking fresh, thoughtful writing and have nothing to gain by keeping well-crafted work out of the pages of their journals. Editors do more than determine which pieces will be published and which will not. They also provide constructive feedback. They help writers to present their ideas in the best way possible and protect them from making embarrassing professional gaffes."*
>
> Patricia A. Crawford

Reviewers for commercial book publishers usually receive a small honorarium and authors also receive compensation for their work, although it is nothing like the royalties earned by popular books that sell millions of copies. College textbooks and scholarly books have smaller audiences/markets, hence rather smaller profits for authors. In the business world, it is acceptable to allow more than one publisher to compete for the manuscript.

COMMUNICATE WITH AUTHORS

No one is immune to the ego-deflating effect of negative comments about a rejected manuscript. As one author confessed, "When I get an acceptance letter, I take the day

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off and celebrate, but when I get rejected, I can't convince myself to work for several days." Be aware that beginning writers often mistake a less-than-enthusiastic response for an outright rejection. They frequently get discouraged and entomb manuscripts that need to be revised in the furthest recesses of the bottom file cabinet drawer.

A much better practice is to carefully consider the reviewers' recommendations, revise and (if the editor suggested it) resubmit. Editors do not encourage authors to resubmit unless they really mean it, so read such a suggestion as an invitation to continue working together to produce a stronger publication. Even if one journal does not encourage resubmission, try the manuscript with another publisher after incorporating the recommendations for improvement. "As an author approaches completion of a manuscript, some of the most critical motivational issues emerge, for the author must decide that he or she is willing to be criticized and willing to revise and resubmit a manuscript" (Chesebro, 1993, p. 376).

> *"Judicious, scrupulous editing should be the aim of all editors. They cannot go beyond a certain point in altering the written word, lest the work cease to be that of the author."*
>
> Lucy Prete Martin

While virtually every author can relate a story about a manuscript that was rejected by one publisher and warmly accepted by another, it is foolish to conclude from these anecdotal impressions that persistence is the writer's only real virtue. Famous novelists may collect

enough rejection letters to paper their walls, but their situation is not comparable to that of the educator who is writing for publication. Novelists engage in creative writing, which is extremely individualistic. Evaluation of their work is usually dependent upon attracting one editor's attention and satisfying his or her idiosyncratic reading tastes and sense of what will sell.

If an educator writes an article for *Childhood Education*, however, it is a very different matter. The author's role is to share a skillful blend of theory, research and practice with fellow practitioners, not to write the Great American Novel.

Oversee Production

After a manuscript is accepted, still more is required of an author. The work will be professionally edited and returned to the author as galleys or proofs—usually a typeset version of the manuscript. And, as if to elevate the author's stress level even further, these corrections are usually expected back in the editor's hands within a few days.

When the proofs arrive, resist the temptation to give them a cursory glance and send them back. Read slowly, looking at each word. Read the title, people's names, the headings, the figures and every word in the reference list. Errors that were not a part of the original work can be introduced when the manuscript is edited, scanned or type-set. As the old definition goes, a scholar is someone who finds her or his own mistakes and nowhere is this more true than when it comes to proofreading a manuscript. Careless errors can be extremely embarrassing and tarnish a professional reputation.

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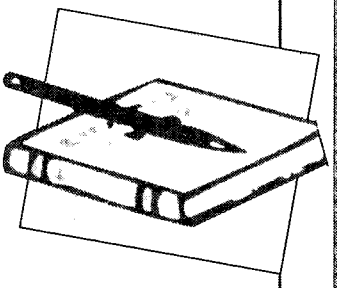

CONCLUSION

When does a person officially become a published author? A colleague remarked, "Well, I'm not a real *author. I've only published two articles." Fame, fortune and instant name recognition are not the determinants of who qualifies as an author in education. Rather, authorship is a role that emerges over time, much like a child who grows into the role of reader. Just as it is difficult to say the precise moment at*

which a child becomes a reader, it is equally difficult to pinpoint the moment at which an educator who writes becomes an author.

A person's self-concept as an author evolves over time until she or he looks back over what has been produced and

ADVICE TO AUTHORS

- Have something to discover or say, and work from motivation, not obligation or trendiness.
- Be reader-centered rather than author-centered; focus on questions your readers are likely to have.
- Read widely and well from current and classic sources that are authoritative rather than counting on a few textbooks, a computer search or the Internet.
- Invest many ideas and resources into one manuscript rather than hoarding some for future projects.
- Accept full responsibility for a carefully crafted manuscript rather than expecting others to do your "homework" for you.
- Recognize the limitations of word processing; just because you can move a paragraph quickly does not mean it should be moved.
- Approach reviews and critiques of your manuscripts as opportunities to hone your craft.
- Read articles and books for style instead of always focusing on content.
- Subject your work to peer review by colleagues *before* you mail it off for anonymous peer review.
- After you have said to yourself, "It's almost done!" let your manuscript get cold, come back to it and rewrite it at least five more times.
- Build credibility with the editor and conform to the manuscript submission guidelines rather than ignoring details.
- Do not trust your memory of referencing styles; master the rules of American Psychological Association (APA) style and consult the rules often until they are ingrained.

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is surprised by the many different projects and aware of what lessons were learned through each manuscript. Often, that experienced author feels a special obligation to help other struggling authors, just as she or he has been supported and coached along the way. This mentoring process replenishes the supply of newcomers, some of whom will seem to burst upon the writing scene while others gradually come to the fore. All contribute to the field and communicate with a wider audience through the printed page.

> *"Writing is fun because you keep learning. Before you begin to write, read what is already published by the organization. Find out who the audience is and determine the journal's needs. Then match what you write to the intended audience. As you write, keep asking yourself: What would make me want to keep reading this?"*
>
> Janet Brown McCracken

Numerous benefits accrue to the educator who becomes an author; professional writing does more than merely transmit or collect information. It synthesizes information and invents new knowledge as authors realize what it is that they have to say (Smith, 1992). Additionally, writing is a disciplined way of thinking that enables the writer to delve beneath the surface, bringing order out of chaos and offering opportunities for self-expression. Finally, writing for colleagues in the field gives the author a way of recording thoughts and experiences so that they can be recalled and relived in the future (Csikszentmihalyi, 1990). When asked, "Why do people write?," one 2nd-grader succinctly concluded, "You write so you can keep it."

GLOSSARY OF WRITING TERMS

Abstract. A brief synopsis that presents the main ideas and conclusions. The abstract is often used for indexing purposes.

Anonymous peer review. An independent evaluation of a manuscript by a reviewer who does not know the author's name, institutional affiliation or other identifying characteristics.

Blind review. See anonymous peer review and refereed journal.

Copy-editing. A detailed edit of a manuscript that focuses on mechanical aspects of language. The copy-editor's task is to eliminate errors in fact or logic, correct punctuation and spelling, maintain a consistent style, and check the grammatical structure of the manuscript.

Cover letter. A one-page letter of introduction sent with a book or article that offers a brief synopsis of the manuscript, the author's qualifications and contact information.

Galley. The first proof of the typeset material that is usually shared with the author, who is responsible for reading it carefully to eliminate errors.

Letter of inquiry. A one-page business letter to a publisher that briefly describes a manuscript idea, provides reasons why it should be published, and

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asks for the editor's opinion of the proposal.

Manuscript. The typed copy of an author's work that is prepared in accordance with the specific publisher's guidelines and submitted for review.

Multiple submissions. The practice of sending a manuscript to more than one publisher at a time. This is unethical when dealing with nonprofit professional association publishers. When working with commercial publishers, it is considered to be acceptable to work with more than one company at a time and the author is free to use this as a way to negotiate a better contract.

Nonthematic publication. Multi-topic journals (or issues of journals) that do not focus on a particular theme.

Page charges. The fee that some scholarly journals charge authors to typeset technical data or statistical tables.

Proofs. See galley.

Publication lag. The time period between acceptance of a manuscript and its actual publication date.

Refereed journal. A journal that uses two or more independent reviewers (referees) to evaluate submitted articles. This practice is often referred to as anonymous peer review.

SASE (Self-addressed, stamped envelope). This is frequently a requirement for manuscript submission.

Style sheet. A journal or book publisher's specific instructions on how to prepare a manuscript for submission and publication.

Theme issue. An issue of a periodical that has a particular topic or focus.

Unsolicited manuscript. A manuscript that has been submitted without an invitation from the publisher.

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